General Encoding Issues

Automating the Creation of Finding Aids Using EAD

A good way to standardize encoding is by creating a set of EAD templates and macros and to use them consistently during finding aid creation. Because the introductory and high-level descriptive elements of the finding aid are quite regular, they lend themselves to automatic processing. Information entered into forms or dialog boxes can be processed into valid EAD markup. By requiring the inclusion of agreed upon information in all fields of these mark-up devices, EAD finding aids become more consistent within institutions. NCEAD does not prescribe any one set of templates or macros. Each institution should choose the system that works best for it as long as they are compliant with these guidelines. Sharing and discussing these systems benefits all.

Tools created by NCEAD and made available through the NCEAD website are consistent with the encoding practices outlined in this document. These tools however require some customization for individual institutional implementation. Guidelines for customizing the tools are available on the Tools webpage (http://www.ncecho.org/ncead/tools/tools_home.htm) along with the tools themselves. Institutions wishing to contribute forms, dialog boxes or other tools for sharing should contact Kathy Wisser, the NC ECHO Metadata Coordinator (katherine.wisser@duke.edu).

XSL Stylesheets

XML encoding relies upon external stylesheets to render the documents in a web browser. These stylesheets are written in eXtensible Stylesheet Language (XSL). XML and XSL are inter-dependent: the former focuses on content, while the latter focuses on display. Although a few EAD tags (<emph> and <title> discussed below) affect display directly through an attribute, most elements in EAD are independent of display and rely on definitions in a corresponding XSL file for rendering in a browser. Because of this relationship, all elements used in an EAD document that have display specifications must be defined in the corresponding XSL document.

The NCEAD toolkit includes a simple XSL stylesheet solution created for individual institution customization. Directions on customizing and downloading this stylesheet package are available at the Tools Homepage (http://www.ncecho.org/ncead/tools/tools_home.htm). Information on the stylesheet itself and related XSL information can be found on that page and within the stylesheets themselves. NCEAD welcomes the addition of other stylesheets to share from contributing members. Please contact Kathy Wisser, NC ECHO Metadata Coordinator (katherine.wisser@duke.edu).